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SUBJECT: GUINEA BISSAU: WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

REF: A. STATE 184972

[1](#)B. DAKAR 0527

[1](#)1. This cable responds to Ref A on the Worst Forms of Child Labor report. The situation in Guinea-Bissau is little changed since last reported on the 2005 Child Labor Report and the 2006 Trafficking in Persons Report (Ref B).

BACKGROUND

[1](#)2. Guinea-Bissau does not have a serious problem with the worst forms of child labor. There is very little industry, mining, or production of any kind aside from agriculture, mainly cashews. The worst forms of child labor that exist throughout the country according to NGOs and government officials are prostitution and trafficking for begging. Prostitution is not widespread and is not organized. Trafficking occurs when religious leaders or their agents transport children to neighboring countries, usually Senegal, for forced begging. (See Ref B.)

[1](#)3. Two other dangerous forms of labor were identified by leading child rights NGO Association for Women and Children (AMIC): assisting on fishin and transport canoes in the ocean and selling small items in the street which preclude children from attending school and expose them to exhaust and potential traffic accidents. Also, children sometimes sell basic items late at night around the few bars and discos in Bissau.

LAWS AND ENFORCEMENT

[1](#)4. The current law prohibits children from working until they reach the age of 14 and complete the sixth grade in school. However, the penalty for breaking this law has not been updated since the law was drafted; so the current value of the fine is less than one US dollar. The law defines the worst forms of child labor in the same way the International Labor Organization (ILO) does, although Guinea-Bissau is not yet a party to ILO Conventions 182 or 138. However, the National Assembly debated both conventions on December 12 and, according to the Director General of Labor, Augusto Alberto, voted to ratify the same day.

[1](#)5. Enforcement of all crimes is weak, not just child labor infractions. The judiciary is not fully independent, police are often unpaid and most have never received professional training. There is no prison, and jail conditions are very poor. Corruption is pervasive. UNICEF has an ongoing

program to provide broad assistance on children,s rights in conjunction with the Government,s Institute of Women and Children. The USD 88,000 program includes awareness, training for police and NGOs, and assistance.

PREVENTION AND ASSISTANCE

16. The GOGB provides little additional assistance to eliminating the worst forms of child labor. It contributes annual operating funds to AMIC and another NGO, S.O.S., both of which work to fight child trafficking among other programs. Those same NGOs and others receive tax breaks and Government assistance to cover utility costs. Key ministries cooperate and assist in implementation of NGO programs such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture-funded program to provide school lunches. However, the GOGB indirectly contributes to the problem of child labor by not paying teachers, salaries, sometimes for months at a time. As a result, schools are often closed and children end up working more and studying less.

17. Guinea-Bissau signed onto a regional initiative to combat trafficking in people this year in Libreville, Gabon. The initiative includes a multilateral accord and plan of action to combat trafficking in women and children.

JACOBS